

UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS LOWELL
CENTER FOR LOWELL HISTORY
ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION

THE WORKING PEOPLE OF LOWELL
LOWELL NATIONAL HISTORICAL PARK
MARY BLEWETT/MARTHA MAYO

INFORMANT: EDWARD HARLEY

INTERVIEWER: PAUL PAGE

DATE: OCTOBER 29, 1985

P = PAUL

E = EDWARD

Tape 85.22

P: We're here today at the Lowell National Historical Park Service, and I'm interviewing Edward Harley for the working people of Lowell Project, and so I think I'll start with a question about your parents. Where did they live?

E: Both my parents came from Lowell. When they married they moved to Brooklyn. My mother became an information operator, and my father drove a Drakes Cake horse wagon. They remained there until the depression. When both jobs were lost, returned to Lowell and brought me with them.

P: How did your parents meet?

E: I would assume at a dance, I'm not sure. What is now the Commodore Ballroom at that time was called by another name, but it was a very popular dance place. Since both of them danced a lot, I would assume they met that way.

P: Yah. Are they (--)

E: Both are dead.

P: Both are dead. So were they both Irish?

E: My father was Irish, my mother was 3/4 Irish.

P: And both Catholic?

E: Yes.

P: Do you know any, anything about how your, your grandparents or great grandparents came to this country?

E: My grandfather come over here in the 1880's, got a job with the street railway. And although the company changed names and management several times, he remained with them for 54 years. He drove horse drawn trolley's, and he drove the last horse drawn trolley, or at least one of the last horse drawn trolley's in Lowell, and one of the first of the electric cars. Remained with the electric cars until the buses came in, and moved to the garage then and worked for several more years with them, until he broke his hip and had to retire. He married and had a family. His wife died. He remarried my grandmother, had three more children with her, one of which was my father. My grandmother raised the other children [unclear] had by his first wife. My grandmother come over here, and brought over by an aunt who brought her family over one at a time. [Clears throat] She went to work in Rhode Island in Converse Rubber. And sometime in the beginning of the 19th century Converse Rubber went out of business down there. They moved, not went out of business, they moved to the Malden area. And my aunt, well my grandmother and her aunt, and her sisters moved up there. And somewhere along the line my grandfather and she met and were married. Both came from the same part of Ireland in Donegal.

P: Did, do you remember them bringing over any handicrafts, or talents that were specifically Irish?

E: My grandfather, they were very few talents that were Irish, I mean sowing potatoes was not a hard thing to do.

P: Well I thought, I was thinking for your mother, they may have been whatever crocheting, knitting.

E: No, my mother was born in this country.

P: Oh yah.

E: My father and mother were both born here. My grandparents, on my father side, were both born in Ireland. My grandparents, on my mother's side, were both born in the United States. My mother's parents were both mill people. My grandfather on my mother's side came from Fort Ticonderoga. My grandmother came from Sommersworth, N.H.. I'm not sure where they've met, but both came to work in the mills in Lowell. My grandfather became an overseer at the Boott Mill, and remained there until he died two weeks after I was born. And it's interesting to see in the newspaper accounts that the management of the Boott attended his funeral which was kind of rare, but he had been with him for a good many years at that time.

P: Yah. Was he (--) Was he involved in any of the (--) I think the Boott was subject of strikes, I mean in certain periods.

E: No, this would be a much earlier period than that.

P: Then that, yah.

E: Yah, he would of been with him during the strikes of twelve and fourteen around there, but he would of been management, he would not of have participated in the strike himself.

P: Yah, I was wondering there if he would have (--) Well you may not, you weren't, you may not have known though, but if he had any opinions regarding strikes?

E: I'm sure be did.

P: Yah.

E: I don't know of them. But I'm, you know, anyone who's management that long and has been brought up in that way, would usually have a definite idea of a strike, not be too much in favor of it.

P: Being Irish did that have any, did that help him, or hinder him in his ascent?

E: He was not Irish.

P: Oh, I see.

E: He was a quarter, his mother was Irish, his father was French. His wife, my grandmother was Irish, on both sides.

P: So do you see his ethnic, his nationality, or his ethnic background as being a factor in his success, or (--)

E: I have never thought of it that way. I'm sure the only thing that was a factor, was the fact when he come down here, he had already had experience in mills, and as such (unclear/noise in background) somebody who obviously had enough talents in textiles to be more than just secondhand or something.

P: Yah. (Clears throat)

E: It's unfortunate now that I never at the time ask my mother any of the questions that I would now have. She and most of her family, followed him into the mill. She went in at fourteen. My uncle, her brother, also went in early, he was older than she, and he remained in the mills for all of his life, with the exception of the First World War when he went to work in the Cartridge Shop, but he ended up in the Boott Mill also as a floor boss. And in turn he had a son and a daughter who worked there in the mill. So that through my grandfather at least four of his children worked at the Boott after, well not after, but with him.

P: Do you recall him telling (--)

E: I don't recall my grandfather. He (P: Died) died when I was two weeks old.

P: Oh.

E: I recall my grandfather on my father's side very well. I grew up with him, but my mother's side, I knew my grandmother, but not my grandfather.

P: Did (--) Your other grandfather was the one involved with the railways (E: Umhm) street cars, and I don't know, jitneys. Well anyways, did he ever mention any aspects of his work to you, or to the changes that are taken place in transportation?

E: It wasn't a hell of a lot of changes taken place while I knew him. The big change had taken place of course from the horses to the electric cars. And then while I was there, the electric cars to the bus. And he didn't mention it much, but of course it was obvious that he couldn't ah, he drove a bus the way he drove a trolley, right down the middle of the street as if there were tracks on it. This was not the way, you know, it was meant to be. So he was retired then to the barn, and as I said, stayed there for probably another six or seven years, until he broke his hip. (P: Hm) But he obviously was not qualified for driving a bus in traffic. Things were, all things considered as I remember he wasn't qualified to drive a car in traffic either. My grandfather was (--) Well there's an old saying that "There's no sense in being Irish, if you can't be thick." And my grandfather, he was certainly Irish. He was as thick a man I ever knew, a very very good man to me, but he was thick.

P: What do you mean by that? Is there anything specific?

E: Well I assume you know what I mean when I say thick. (P: Yah) Opinionated and stubborn, and (--)

P: I'm wondering if his circumstances for, either required him to be like that, or as a certain protection in a sense.

E: No. No, you have to understand that at that time just about every conductor, or street car man, was Irish. I don't think there were many that were not. And if everyone was like that I mean we'd have a bad, bad situation. My grandfather never worked on St. Patrick's Day. He worked Christmas, Fourth of July, New Years and holiday at all, but not on St. Patrick's Day. And I don't know who the hell worked on St. Patrick's Day, but most of them were up my house, or his house where I lived on that morning and in pretty good shape, or pretty bad shape, whichever way you want to look at it. (P: [Giggles])

E: At one point he was ordered to work on a St. Patrick's Day. My aunt was telling me this story, and refused, and told them no, he'd work any day, but not that day. That day was to him a little special. And he was told he was fired. [P: giggle] And he said in that case, "I'm fired," after many many years. But when reports had got to higher authorities they [unclear] it's just too stupid a thing to fire a man because he would not work one particular day out of the year, and not ever done it before. (P: Yah) But he would of gone with, he would not have backed down. So for that I don't consider that thick, I consider that a matter of principal. Thickness comes from

the fact, if he did something wrong, he'd refuse to admit it. But he considered himself right in all things. The man was very sure of himself, very sure.

P: What would he do on St. Patrick's Day?

E: Well what a lot of Irish, and every body who's not Irish, does on St. Patrick's Day I guess. They'll go out a celebrate in a manner that wasn't celebrating, in a way that wasn't celebrated in Ireland. You'd have a bubble or two. The main thing was he would not work. He'd go to mass of course in the morning.

P: Yah. So.

E: St. Patrick's Day mass in St. Peter's Parish was very special day anyway, because I can still recall the the majesty of the organ, and a very special organ, a very big organ is still there. And played by a man named Henry Kelley, who was an extremely capable organist, very talented. And after mass ended he played a song called, "All Hail To St. Patrick". I hear it very very rarely, but, when I do, I still sort of swell up a little, like (--) And it was, since St. Patrick's was (--) Since the Congregation of St. Patrick's, or St. Peters rather was mainly Irish, it was a special day.

P: And St. Peters was built by Irish?

E: Well mainly by Irish. I mean there might have been a few others thrown in there, but it was basically an Irish church, yah.

P: Yah. What role did the Irish clergy, the clergy whether they were Irish or not, I imagine they were, but the clergy have in the Irish community?

E: Well (--)

P: The reason I ask that, is because historically, typically Irish, I don't know if it's just (--) I don't know if it's just, no it's not just in this area. The Irish community has been catagorized or stereotyped as having two power centers around the turn of the century; the clergy and the saloon owners. I mean I know that's just a stereotype, but (--)

E: I don't know if it's a stereo type or not, I mean if you study the adds of that era, just in Lowell, you'll find that most of the saloons and package stores were owned by, by Irish. [Clears throat] Well the street car conductors, mainly at that point, at the turn of the century, were Irish. A hell of a lot of the policemen at that time were Irish. And years to come most of them were Irish. So there were, but the priests in Lowell would mainly be made up I think of two, [Clears throat] two ethnic backgrounds, which is not surprising; one being French, and one being Irish. That was the main population of the city, and the Catholic population of the city,

P: Yah.

E: So that you wouldn't expect to find a high number of Polish priests, or Lutheran priests. There were some, but I mean they were usually brought in from, from Poland or from Lithuania. Most of the priests in the area would be either Catholic, Irish or French. And in the early 20th Century, and the late 19th Century of course it was every mother's dream to get her boy into priesthood. So much so that I'm sure many, many of them, many of the boy's that became priests, became only because they were told all of their lives that this is what they were meant for. Perhaps not given a choice of their own, but I, I can't see the clergy has having a great influence on people like my grandfather. There was always with the Irish, a respect for the clergy. But a big influence was on the children who attend parochial schools. And that of course is where the mind was molded. And that was something that's been retained by almost all parochial school graduates to the end of their days.

P: So your parents had how many children?

E: My parents had two, my sister and myself.

P: And did they, did they insist more or less that you go to Irish schools? Parochial schools?

E: Oh yah. Not insist on. There was no such thing as insisting on, because they just said, "You're going." I mean you know, to insist means that somebody is going to give you an argument. You were told what to do and you did it.

P: Yah. I'm not too clear about whether there was even an option?

E: No, there was no option.

P: Um, not for you, but in general?

E: Oh yah, well there was plenty of (--)

P: Other schools.

E: Public schools.

P: Oh yah. Did (--) Would you characterize your appearance as wanting to continue the tradition of what ever past they had, into this, into your generation?

E: Yah, oh yah.

P: Like I'm French Canadian. So my parents would like to see me able to speak French, let's say, or even to cook French foods, that kind of thing.

E: Well we didn't have any of the that type of thing, I mean the French Canadians have traditions that are noticed as traditions, or can easily be recognized as traditions. And the Irish didn't have anything that was cut and dried. I mean Irish life would be pretty standard and foods that, French food you know, Corton or meat pies, or that, are very ethnic sounding and looking

to anyone who's not French. But mainly the foods eaten by the Irish, were eaten by everybody. I mean it was potatoes, and cabbage, meats of any sort. So that I don't think you can get a traditional meal, except ones you're going to stereotype, corn beef and cabbage. And corn beef was a big deal, because it was an easy, it was one of the few meals that you can hold, and you could keep. You know, once it was corn you could hold it for awhile. Cabbage was a cheap vegetable, and it was one that they knew in Ireland with the potatoes. So that, but this was the same food that would be eaten by many other people after they got here, and for the same reasons. So I don't know if there was any hard traditions. Traditions would have been a tie with Ireland, the Irish music which followed them over here, the observance of St. Patrick's Day. And the dislike perhaps the things that are British government. But I, I, you know I mean they were dances, but they still don't seem to me to have the same, ethnic recognition that some of the French (P: Yah) Quadrilles, or something, might have. If you would see Irish dancers, you might be watching a Southern Square Dance, or something at the same time. There's a similarity there.

P: As far as dance, music wouldn't be all that different from the American.

E: Well there was. I mean Saturday night in my house, my grandfather sat in the chair and played a program that was on each Saturday night, called The O'Leary's Irish Minstrels. And he would sit there and stomp his feet, and listen to that, and because of that, I grew up liking Irish music. But he didn't play any instrument. Nobody but my (--) There were a couple that played the piano, but I mean the music that was played was not basically Irish. It was popular songs. And in that day most of the popular songs had some, many of the popular songs would have an Irish background or Irish message, meaning.

P: Yah. Would (--) A lot of criticisms I remember of the Irish when they first came to this country, is that they, they were a raucous group. They didn't conform to whatever Yankee traditions they're might have been. They played loud music, drank all night, went out dancing. This was all (--)

E: Now when you say, you this first, when they first came to this country?

P: I'd have to say (--)

E: Where are we talking about? When are we talking?

P: Well this period I'd characterize as being from the 1860's to the 1900's basically. That, that cut and that, and then later, in the 20th Century we had this kind of progressive movement. And a lot of it as far as I was concern, this was directed against some of the Irish excessers, whatever they were in reality. And so my point is there, did you see any, a conflict between the Irish and other [sect] dominant groups in the city here?

E: Oh yah. I grew up with it you know. But this is not in my home. You have to understand that my neighborhood was very mixed. It was basically Irish and Portuguese, but there were Italian's, Scotch, French, and a couple of Swedes, all on the same street, and all as part of the neighborhood. And it was a very cohesive neighborhood, and a very, very neighborly

neighborhood, and absolutely no types of antagonism towards one another. Each person looking out for the other person's interest at all times. Every mother, every woman on the street was my mother. If I was doing something wrong I'd get wacked by anybody that was there. It was considered the thing to do, you know. A kid had a place in the world it was keep his mouth shut and be good. And your parents expected anybody else that caught you doing something wrong to give you a little bit of a whack. It was quite a different atmosphere. So that there was no, in the adult world, in my adult world, the adult world of my childhood there was no apparent feeling of distrust, or uneasiness between different ethnic groups in the neighborhood. That is not to say that each of the ethnic groups didn't perhaps disparage into themselves, (P: Yah) the others. And I know this happened. It was always interesting to me, or more so since I (respected them), that my grandmother called American born children, if they were an Italian family's or Portuguese, "greenhorns." She was not born here, they were, but they were the greenhorns, because there names were so obviously foreign. (P: Hm) And no Irishmen considered himself to be an alien, because it was just a matter of fact, that you came from Ireland to America. I mean it was you know, it was your country. That's the way they felt about it. So that it was the exotic name that made this kid a greenhorn. I don't know, do you know what a greenhorn is? A greenhorn would be somebody that comes from another country, to this country, and doesn't yet know the ropes.

P: Oh yah.

E: So that when (--) When my friend Raymond would come up, she'd say, "The little greenhorn is out waiting for you." Not, not a term of (--) It was just to her that he was not (--)

P: Fact of life. (Giggles)

E: Yah, he was Italian, he was not American, you see.

P: Yah.

E: So she didn't (--) She didn't mean anything by it. It wasn't a term that would hurt him, it was just that you know. Well you know the term, that word green, someone who's (--) I don't (--) Its used even still today to characterize someone who is (--)

E: Someone who doesn't realize yet its green.

P: Yah, it's (--) I wonder (--) That's probably how that little (--).

E: Well it could well be. The word green itself probably adjectively might of come from the fact that, a cut down version of the, of the term that she used. But now I myself later on, I played ball in the Acre with an Irish team, and most of the teams we played, were ethnic in there in their structure. And you would play with the Black Hawks were we play against them I mean. The Canadian A.C., the Cunnocks as they were called. That was there term by the way. [P: Giggles] Once again, some of these terms of lately become, or seem suddenly to appear to be (P: Derogatory) derogatory. And then at the time I don't think they really were,.. because for one thing, to use the word Port now for Portuguese is frowned on, but I know two Portuguese fellows

that I grew up with, and there nicknames were Port. I mean that's what they were called by their own brothers and sisters, you know. And Cunnock was a word that was used, it was, I think it must have at one time been a French-Canadian derivation for Canadian American, or something. And they called themselves the Cunnock's. Now I noticed the word is not used, but what I'm saying anyways is that we played against other ethnic groups. (P: Yah) And in the acre itself, or in little Canada there were turfs that you didn't walk through by yourself, unless you were forced to. Some harassment would occur once in awhile. Someone would go over and harass them. But this was strictly kids stuff, and adults didn't have, to my recollection, the same problems. Strictly a matter of (--)

P: When you would play baseball against different, different groups, did you find your, find that your, either your pride, or your, or something (E: Oh yah), something was on the line, other than, simply winning or losing, something more.

E: Oh no, no. No! Great pride pride in the Irish. And the Black Hawks had a great pride in the Greeks, I mean you know, there was (--) And you played, and played very hard, and they would be fights, because, not because you were win or losing, but because it was important that you were better than the other team. There wasn't a hell of a lot of sportsmanship [unclear]. Once again a matter of turf, and a matter of pride in your background.

P: Umhm.

E: But that, still you had, always had friend's on the other teams. I mean, we were friendly with a lot of the Greeks that we played against, off the field. Ah, I was friendly with some of the French fellows. I was friendly with the people in Centralville. People in the south end I, I came from the south end and played against them. On the field they would be fights. So it was, it was a matter of conflict on the field. And as I said, the other conflict would come in the invasion of turf, if that's what it could be called. I mean you are in a group and you're walking through a section of town that, for example little Canada, people from Little Canada thought it was pretty damn fresh of us to come walking down there. And they in turn, if they had to walk through a section of the Arce that I'm speaking of, we'd either be in a group, or if there were just one or two, run like hell [few words unclear], because life was a better part of valor (unclear). Ah, the, the, things that you read about in the early history of Lowell, the night fights and that, they occurred once again, once in awhile with older youths. But in my time I don't recall it happening particularly with adult, in the adult world.

P: Did (--) Well I was thinking, what would cause someone to walk out to little Canada for example, or to walk out to the Acre, when a lot of the activity in the city must of been sort of around a central core, and the neighborhoods were fringes? Is that right? Is that a good way to characterize it?

E: Well let's put it this way. If you lived in little Canada, and you wanted to get to a theater, you could go down through the square, and then down Central Street and that would keep you out; or you could just cut right down through the Arce, which is a hell of a lot closer. And ah, it happened all the time. I mean it, you know, this was not something where you were going to get killed. [P: Laughs] I mean you tried to avoid it, or if you did you try to get through fast. And if

you saw a group, if you were going in any part of the city, and you saw a large group of fellows up above who you thought might be residents sort of speak, of that particular corner, you'd go out of your way perhaps to get around them, especially if you're alone. But I mean there were many reasons for going to where you wanted, and in some cases it was just a matter of walking, because walking was a fairly a big occupation, or, or a past time at the time. In days where cars were not as, as noticeable and there was nothing else to do at night, you went walking.

P: Where would you, where would your family buy their groceries and things?

E: Well once again, it's hard to realize for someone who doesn't know the time, to realize the number of grocery stores that there were. In every neighborhood first of all, they would be just an amazing number of small variety store's. Almost every corner would have one. I lived on Crosby Street. At the top of the street there was a little variety store run by, by Margaret [unclear] Finnegan. Right across from them there was a store run, same type of store, run by Minnie Clancy. At the bottom of Crosby Street there was a store run by Mr. Shaw, Mr. & Mrs. Shaw. One block away from that there was a store run by Mr. Blair, a blind man. Up off Butler Avenue there was McCue's Store. Ah, on the next street over on Crosby was Kelly's Store. All of the little places, which would sell bread, small can goods and things of that nature. Most everybody had one of these stores as their favorite. The people that run these of course, would live in one room behind it. They would open at 6:00 in the morning till 10:00 at night, hard life. Especially putting up with kids with 2 pennies worth of candy, rubbing their dirty noses all over the candy counter. Most of this was also done by credit by the way, and many, and much of it I'm sure was never paid back. But when you wanted to buy meat or get the food for the week, you went to a market. And now they are a hell of a lot of markets, as we know them today of course, smaller markets. And some specialized in meats, some were all around markets and butchers. We dealt with a store called O'Brien's on Gorham Street, at the corner of Keen, which was supposed to be known for it's high quality meat. (P: Hm) And the rest of the grocery department was not too large. They, they specialized in meat. And the price there would be a little higher than most other stores. Ah, the other markets, I worked in one for many years, and as I said it was very different from the markets we know today. When I worked there some of my duties would be to write (--)

Tape I, side A ends
Tape I, side B begins

E: Plywood boxes of tea that would contain, I, I don't know how much tea it would be. It would be an enormous mount of tea, but in weighed, tea being light, probably 50 pounds. And to bag that in 1lb. or 1/2 lb. bags (unclear) large carton of cheap type of plywood as we know it now, it would be curled and breaking apart from having been wet, on the trip over covered with exotic oriental sign. You would tear that off, and here was this very heavy foil. And tearing that apart your nostril's would assailed by fantastic smell of this fresh tea. You would take the scoop, and you would have a set of scales there, manuel scales, not (--) Just balanced scales, and you would just measure enough, either a half pound or a pound, pour that into a small brown bag, and do that. You would also do that with sugar. Sugar would be brought in, in bulk, and then we

rebagged. Cleaning chicken's, turkeys, there was no (--) Most of these things were brought in by local farmer's.

P: Yah.

E: And they were sold.

P: Live?

E: Not live, but sometimes mostly plucked, but not eviscerated, and which had some feet attached. And so you'd have to chop the head off, chop the feet off, cut the gullet, and the tail section, and reach in and pull it out, everything that was there, and restore to the bird, those things that could be used. Such as the heart and then (--) And it was to me the most distasteful job that I had, because in the summer when it was hot, really, really odorous job. And in the winter, when they were frozen your fingers just went numb, because the blood and the, everything had turned into an icy, slushy consistency which was not easily handled. And then on Turkey's, Thanksgiving, which would be Thanksgiving, Christmas would be the only time we'd have turkey's, but they'd come in that same way. You had to break the legs off turkeys. You didn't chop them, you broke them off. And I think, next to the material that's used on space ships, the toughest thing in the world, is a turkey leg. They used to, they had a metal gadget that would be on the walls of all markets. It was made so that when you put the turkey's leg in, there were some tines that held it in place. And there was sort of a fulcrum. And when you put some weight on that turkey, that fulcrum was supposed to break that leg right there. So that when you pulled the leg off, you had some (tendons) which would come out, and the knees were what you traditionally see in picture's of turkeys as the little lacy type thing that caps the end of the turkey leg.

P: Oh yah.

E: But if you come in when I was doing that you'd probably find a 60 pound kid swinging like hell on the end of a turkey, a dirty white apron [unclear], and not being able to snap that thing. It was a hard, hard job. [P: Giggles] I'd finally get it, but it was difficult. But anyway, when you come in to get an order in the store at that time, there was a counter, it was nothing, very little was placed where you could pick up, and you would stand in line, with your order. And Friday and Saturdays were the big days, as obviously paydays would be either Thursday or Friday, or Saturday. And when you got to the counter you would tell one of the clerks what you wanted individually. He would turn around, something on a top shelf, take this gadget that would allow him to reach up and grab the can of the top shelf, and bring it down. And he would walk back and forth filling your order. And when the entire order was complete, including the meats and everything, he would then turn one of the bags over, right the price down of everything, add it up, tell you what it was, and either charge it to you, or take the money. He took the money. It was rung up in one sale. I mean there was no itemization of these things. It was all in the back of that bag. Then you would either allow this person to take it, or you'd put it in a box to be delivered to them, later on. So that every person that bought anything was being treated, very very individually, and with a great deal of personal service. And they would usually want to see and feel everything, that they were getting. But that's the way we bought. Like I say, we, in my

grandmother's house when I lived there, they did buy from O'Brien's, because that was supposed to be better meat. And and one thing, my grandfather always worked, even at the worst of time, and made fairly decent money for the times. And there were usually others in the house working. So that we always ate extremely well in that house. When we left that house, my mother and I, and my sister, it wasn't always true, but at that time living with my grandparents, we ate extremely well. They always insisted that we ate the best. That wasn't true on furnishings or anything, because those were not considered important, but eating well was very high on a list of things that should be done.

P: Yah, well even my father, still has that additude, that the only thing in life that's important is having a roof over your head, and having something to eat. Everything else is just extra.

E: Well it, it was the thing. What I'm getting at, at that time though, because there was more money in the family then in many of the families in the early 30's (sneezes) we could afford to go to one of these premium stores. As I said, when we left the house we couldn't afford it. Many people would have to go to a store that didn't specialize in quality meats. But that was the shopping of that time.

P: Oh you left your grandparents' house in the 30s?

E: In 36 we left, yah.

P: That's a bad time to leave.

E: Well my mother got a bit of a job, and decided to go on her own, because it wasn't her house.

E: Although we were treated very well there, and she was extremely fond of everybody. She wanted her own. My aunt, my uncle owned a building, it had 4 tenements in it. So we moved into that, and that was a different story entirely.

P: So you had an uncle who owned a tenement?

E: He lived (--) An uncle that I lived with on Crosby Street. My grandfather owned the tenement, I'm sorry. My uncle owned it afterwards. My grandfather owned it. No, before we moved, my uncle bought it from his father and he owned it when we moved into it. The rent was three dollars a week at that time, four rooms. And the four rooms were pine floors that had no under flooring, just pine planking, over a dirt cellar. Absolutely no insulation, no storm windows, no heat of any sort. The heatcame from a coal stove, which you have to [unclear]. No hot water. A black cast iron sink. We did have a toilet and a tub, but in the draftiest bathroom in the world. Very hard place. There is nobody in the City of Lowell today, at any end of the economic structure, well even at the lowest end of it, that would live in a building such as that today. And it was a common thing. All the water had to be heated on the stove. The stove went out, you'd have to start the whole business over. We also did have a small oil stove that would heat the living room. But very hard place to live in.

P: How old were you when you moved there?

E: Ah, when we moved there I would have been nine going on ten.

P: So did you go to high school at all?

E: I went to high school from that house later on, to Lowell High.

P: And, and if you don't mind me asking, where was your father during this time?

E: My father at first had gone out looking for work in other areas. And when he came home he lived with us. Work was very hard to get. And at times you would hear a report from somebody that you knew that there was a place, some place was hiring, or there was a job available some [few words unclear].

P: So what did he do again?

E: At that time?

P: Yah.

E: Anything he could. He had no, he had started off, my family in Lowell, my uncles in Lowell, had the Drake's cake franchise. Now that meant that they were the ones who were allowed to sell to the stores, sell Drake's cakes to the stores. At the time of his marriage he had obtained a job with Drake's in Brooklyn. A horse and wagon driven to the stores, and selling in stores. When the depression really hit, that job folded. That's when he came back. But I mean there was no job available for cake salesmen, you know. So you couldn't say that was his job. So he was he was looking for anything at the time. And once in awhile he would get some work from the W.P.A. but that wouldn't last long [few words unclear]. And so that I don't know what it was he heard about, but he had a couple of friends who, who, had gone off someplace to work and they sent him. Then he worked there for awhile, but the actually amount of money that he would send home while he stay out there wasn't enough to keep up. So he gave it up and he come back here. Well at least that's the way I remember. Maybe the job ended, and he came back.

P: So what did he do here then?

E: Just what he would have done anywhere else, waiting for work, you know. When, when things got better he went to work for the city of Lowell. And also for us as a bar, for my uncle as a bartender when he bought the bar.

P: And where was this bar?

E: Bar was on Whipple Street off back Central, close to the neighborhood that (--) [Background noise-traffic]

P: Is it still there?

E: No, bar is gone. The building is gone.

P: So I imagine you've seen a lot of buildings being torn down in the city.

E: A great number.

P: How, how did you, how do you react to that or (--)

E: Oh, at the time they were being torn down, the one's that I considered important, which would be the boarding houses, I was much against it. First of all you have to understand that when the mills came down, most of the mills, with the exception of the Merrimack, it didn't make a great impression on me, because I didn't understand what they were, or what was being done. That they were being taken down for tax purposes, because they were empty. Management would have to pay taxes on the building as improvement. So they tore them down. They didn't have to pay any taxes. Just an economic, it made economic sense to tear them down. But in the 60's, or in the late 50's, when they started tearing down many of the buildings that were obviously still in good shape, and obviously had a charm, or a beauty, and I found the boarding houses to have a great charm and beauty, that upset me, and it upset most people. But public opinion and just didn't, or public involvement didn't have the structure that it has now. (P: Hm) And the people that were in power at that time, Lowell city politics and in the background, did just about what they wanted. And so these buildings came down. Even after the boarding house's were pulled down, there was one extremely attractive little building left, it was called the Grist Mill, and the Union National Bank wanted the parking lot. So they said they would raise that. In amidst great uproar they just took it down. These same people today are sitting back in the ad's, and they put in saying you know, "Thank God for saving Lowell. We're doing our part." You know, they were the ones that tore it down.

P: So speaking, thinking about politics, was your family involved in politics at all?

E: Oh yes they were. I had an uncle who ran for office and was elected. At that time county commissioners had associates county commissioners also. And he was the first democratic associate county commissioner from whatever section of the county he ran for. My father himself was very very interested in politics, and never ran for any thing but would work hard for people that he was (--) Of course everybody would, because you work for someone in hopes that he would be elected. If he was elected you got some sort of reward, whether it would be a job, or [unclear] put somebody else into a job.

P: Yah. Was this still in the 20's, 30's?

E: This would be in the 30's (P: Yah), and the 40's. I, I didn't observe a hell of a lot in the 20's. I was born in 27. (P: Yah) 33 is when I started to look around and see things that I could still recall.

P: Yah. Do you, you must remember the flood then.

E: I remember the flood.

P: And the hurricane?

E: The hurricane even more so. The flood is interesting to me, because I use to go to Centralville almost each weekend to stay with my grandmother overnight, Friday's after school. And one of the great memories of my life is crossing the foot bridge that was put up after the flood when the Central bridge was being repaired. And crossing was, swaying little suspension bridge that was, thrown across the river for a year or so. Not too much is written about that, but I'm sure many people remember it. Perhaps not a fondness, but certainly it was a little odd that they would walk over it each day. I still can remember seeing an elderly woman holding on for dear life as some of the braver young people would think that the bridge sway as much as they could, you know. They certainly didn't do much to establish a rapport between the elderly and the young.

P: In your, during the holidays or any other day, any other special day of the year, (P: clear throat) was kind of activities did your family do together, what, what, what in a sense, what room of the house would be a focal point, or conversation, or meeting?

E: The focal point in my house would be the dining room. The kitchen and dining room is where you lived. The dining room was large, had a very large table, and it's where everybody gathered after (--) First of all you had, dinner was your lunch, and your evening meal was supper. And nobody ever called it lunch. Twelve o'clock you ate dinner if you were there. Supper was when everybody was there. And after supper everybody would sit at the table, drink tea and talk. My uncle would do his accounts. The radio would be turned on, and I would be underneath it listening to the programs like, Little Orphan Annie, and Jack Armstrong, with my head to the speaker, which was on the bottom of the radio. So I could hear it over there talking. That, that was a social center of the house, and we'd stay there until 7, 8, or 9 o'clock, until people starting going out or going to bed. And I'd be in bed by that time. Till this day I still am a kitchen person. I've grown up in kitchen's. But when you get to Ireland you understand that there are no living rooms. There is usually just a kitchen and bed rooms in the area that I was, my family was from. And even those in my family over there now that do have living rooms, their tendency still is to stay in the kitchen. We went to live in a four-room tenement we had a living room, but we still basically spent more time in the tiny kitchen that we had.

P: What kind of activities would you, did the family like to do?

E: Well there were no unified activities in my grandfather's house. Everybody went their own way of course. Ah, some of them would go dancing, swimming was one, going to amusement parks. In the 30's, when money was tight, the big thing during the summer would be go down to the South common and watch the baseball game, Twilight League, which would attract several thousand people to the common. It had, there a game every night. It was good baseball. [Clears throat] It got you out of the house. Gave you a chance to relax, smoke a cigarette, or whatever, talk to somebody else. Through the 30's it was probably the largest recreation in the city of Lowell, was watching baseball on one of the commons. [Traffic noise in background] And the children going to theaters, of course, the movies. [Comment unclear] And that was a Saturday

morning must. I mean every kid went to the movies, which you eagerly looked forward to all week.

P: Would you happen to know what the so-called, well Yankees you might say, but, were doing, while the immigrant groups were doing what ever they did? Or is, am I making an artificial distinction?

E: As far as I'm concerned, I don't know what a Yankee would be at that time. [P: Giggles] What they would be, would be the people that owned the Locks and Canals perhaps. They were not in my world, and they were very well low key. There were certain names that would certainly be construed as Yankee, but they lived in a different atmosphere. They, as I said, especially low keyed. At this point, most of the politics was between the Irish and the French. The service jobs, the laboring jobs, these were all done by Irish, and Greeks. So the Yankee was somebody who had obtained some sort of stature. And even if he hadn't, I mean, there was no enclave of poor Yankees. You know that there were plenty of enclaves of poor Greeks, or Irish, or Polish or, Lithuanian, or Jew, or anything else, but so the Yankee name was one that (--) I mean everybody thought they were Yankee, you know. Yankee doodle went to (--) The Yanks are coming. But I mean the term Yankee as we talk about now, or as we think in regards to the, early mill group, or days, is one that had no meaning to me at that time, or until just a few years ago.

P: I had another question about politics. In your neighborhood, even if, if they were different, even though they were different ethnic groups, would they vote? Who would they vote for? Even though you may not know naturally, but (--)

E: Well to some degree you did, first of all in local politics you had wards at that time. And you would vote for a ward councilor from your ward, and also one at large. Now if you voting for one from your ward, you're going to vote for somebody you know. Well of course it's crazy for a guy who didn't know anybody in his ward to run. So you voted for one of your neighbors you see. And if he had been in office, or if he had done anything for you, naturally he was the man you were going to vote for and so was the guy across the street; whether he was Portuguese, or French, or whatever. However, if the same man was running and there was a Portuguese fellow running for it, well you naturally expect the Portuguese were going to vote for that man. I mean it just made sense.

P: Yah.

E: But it, it would boil down mostly to democrat and republican. It would be hard for me to say that the Portuguese were all democratic. They might have been republican, I don't know. But if so that would be the difference, not, not the fact that the man was Irish. They wouldn't vote against him because he was Irish. But they might possibly voted against him because he was democrat. I, I really don't know what the Portuguese make up at that time was. There was no, the big thing as I say, was the difference between a democrat and a republican. And it wasn't the matter of nationality so much, except for the fact that if you were Irish you were almost positively democrat. And in my early days if you were French you were republican.

P: When did you see the change? Presumably there was a change toward more favoritism for the democratic candidate after FDR, in cities. That cities started to move more toward, toward electing democratic candidates.

E: I don't know. I can't say that, that's so.

P: Yah.

E: Ah, I, as far as I'm concerned in the cities, the city governments were runned by democrats long before FDR. It was usually the farm votes and things like that, that would elect you president, a republican. (P: Hm yah) Not so much the cities.

P: Right.

E: The cities would usually be democratic.

P: Yah.

E: And the reason for that is because they would largely of that ethnic voter, ethnic background. And the democratic party at that time sort of stood for the little man. And the republican stood for a business. So that it would be, it would just tend to be that democrats were made up of ethnic groups, republicans were made up of business groups, or businessmen.

P: Really?

E: That's the way I recall it. The FDR, of course it's hard to say, he, you know, he was (--) I said I started to remember things about 33, well that's when FDR steps into the picture as president too, and he was president until I was in the service. So that I didn't know a hell of a lot of any president except him. And he was not universally excepted by all democratics either. They were many many democratics who were strongly against Roosevelt.

P: So you mentioned you went into the service. (E: Umhm) What branch?

E: I went into the Navy in 1944.

P: Did you, let's see, did you go to the Pacific?

E: No I didn't. I didn't go out of the country.

P: So after your service was through what did you do?

E: Well I worked at a variety of jobs. I worked driving a truck. Worked in the bar. Worked in package stores. Worked in construction. Worked at just about anything.

P: And when did you, did you get married?

E: No.

P: No. Ah that's right. Somewhere it says that here. Okay. So what happened to the, the package store, or what was it, a saloon?

E: We had a barroom. (P: Yah) It wasn't (--) I say we, it was my uncle's bar. And I worked there. I liked it the first couple of years, but then dislike it, but I would be brought back every time there was some sort of a problem, with other help. And it was a matter of being part of the family. They could get away with things for me they couldn't with other help. I just didn't like it at that time. I would keep leaving to go to other jobs, especially in the summer. I didn't like it in the summer. From there I went to work in a package store, had nothing to do with my family. And I worked there for about ten years. And from there went to Bon Marche and stayed there until that closed. And went to work at the Pollard Library, at that time the City of Lowell Library. I was working there when the Park started here. And I had the historians and planners that had come in, would come in to the area the public library that I had worked in, and I would help them. And at one point they had told me that there was going to be a position opening up for someone with a strong Lowell background and some knowledge of library. And I applied for it and I got it. I've been here for the last six years.

P: What, what has been happening with your sister in the meantime?

E: My sister has a family, and the family has pretty well grown, and she's a grandmother. She works at Raytheon.

P: So as, as children did, did you, what did you do as, for entertainment?

E: Well as I said, you kind of made your own entertainment in the 30's. You made your own games, you made your own toys to a large degree. Making things like scooters ,or go-carts. If somebody left a baby carriage, lost there wheels immediately. Always looking for wheels to put under, under an orange crate. [Clears throat] Swam in a canals. Swam in the rivers, but given a chance to swim in a pool, or a river, or a canal, you'd always pick the river, or the canal. And it's funny too that no matter where you swam you didn't wear a bathing suit. You'd put a bathing suit on when you went to a place where crowds were, but if you were in a Y.M.C.A. pool you couldn't wear a bathing suit. And if you swam in the canals, or river you didn't need one. So.

P: You couldn't? They wouldn't allow you to wear a bathing suit?

E: No, you were not allowed to wear a bathing suit in the YMCA.

P: Can you think of a rationale?

E: Yes, dirty bathing suits. Before you went into the pool you were suppose to take a shower, or step into a (--) But if nobody just what your bathing suit was, or where you've been. So males did not wear bathing suits, child, children or men in the YMCA at that time. And since there was no woman swimming there at that time, didn't have a great deal.

P: And then it was the YMC (--) I wonder if that's why the YWCA.

E: No, the YWCA was in existence at the same time. They, this one didn't have a pool. And later years they did get a night that they could use the YMCA's pool. Then as things progressed, they also got to be a sort of a sharing, and by that time of course we men were wearing bathing suits. But arrangements were made for the sterilization of their bathing suits, I don't know, but that was the rationale as far as I know. The bathing suit could be, somehow contain a germ, or something else (P: Hm) that didn't come out in the shower. So. But that was common. All YMCA's were like that. And the canals, as I say, and the rivers you weren't supposed to be there anyways. When I say the rivers, there were, there were (--) In the Merrimack River you had the the bath house, which is still there, which is just being repaired.

P: Yah.

E: And that had large crowds. And there of course you were mix bathing. And I mean each night there were large, large crowds. Swimming in the Middlesex Canal there were mixed bathers. And you were going to the lake, now Lake Masscuppic was never called lake Masscuppi, it was called Lakeview. And each night hundreds and hundreds of people, thousands of people would go to the lake to either one of several different places bathing. And that was a very popular pastime. That also had, do you know what I'm speaking of, the lake Masscuppic?

P: Yah, I know.

E: Tyngsboro and Dracut.

P: Yah.

E: There was an amusement park there at the time too, and a very large dance hall that was very very popular. And the amusement park had a roller coaster, and bobby horse's and dodgeums, eating spots, drinking spots. The dance hall was a very, very attractive place. In the summer you were right out on the lake.

P: And you, and you mingled with just about anyone. It didn't matter. No distinctions?

E: You would mingle, you'd go with people, you know, from your own neighborhood, but you would go out and dance with the people from other neighborhoods. You would meet people from other neighborhoods. Ah, there was, you know, and as far as we, we get back to the thing that I described as being turf, you know, you would, there was no turf here. You'd be neutral if you were. I mean no grat problem. There was fights of course, but those came about just because of the arrogance of youth. It had nothing to do (--) There might of been some I think, underlying resentments, but I mean basically it was because it didn't matter what, what background you were from, you couldn't fight with another Irish kid, or French kid just because you bumped into him, the usual stupid things that, young males feel necessary to do.

P: So what night of the week would you go to these?

E: Thursday, Wednesday or Thursdays were usually considered old timers nights, but Fridays and Saturdays were the nights that we young people would go.

Tape I, side B ends

Tape II, side A begins

P: So you'd have to go to church on a Sunday I imagine?

E: Church was strictly Sunday. There were no Saturday Masses.

P: Did you have to abstain from eating any food at night Saturday?

E: From midnight on there was no brushing of teeth, no drinking of water, complete abstinence, one that you didn't dare (--) And you, and you didn't dare do it because you knew your teeth were going to fall out as soon as the host hit them if you had done anything. [Plus] if the host hit your teeth they were going to fall out anyway! That's why you stuck your tongue out a foot in a half, (P: [giggle]) to make sure he didn't miss. And the alter boy at that time would have the plate underneath to make sure if the host did fall he would catch it on the plate, rather than have it fall on the floor and you'd have to burn the rug. And these things were very, very (--) [Traffic noise in background very loud]

P: Is that true? Is that really what it was?

E: Well that's the way you were told!

P: I was a alter boy, and I use to hold the little paten, and I knew that I was trying to catch the host if it falls.

E: If it fell then they had to, they had to bless the area. They had to clean it and bless it. There was some sort of a little ceremony. But I mean if it fell into your hands they'd cut your hand off. (P: [Laughs]) This is what the nuns told you. You know, absolutely no way you were going to touch that thing. And I to this day find it very hard to take that thing in my hand. I still stick my tongue out. I'm not gonna have my hand chopped off.

P: [Laughs]

E: Mass was of course a much (--) I like the old Mass better. I like the Latin Mass. It was a great deal more mystic. I didn't understand it. I was an alter boy and I didn't understand what I was saying, but I was, I still find that I would enjoy it more today if it were that way. [Coughs] Priests were different. There was a hell of a lot more priests. There were a hell of a lot more Masses. All sorts of Masses. Large numbers of people at each mass. And the one thing that I don't understand today, and no Catholic can tell me, is how come if I go to see the area where confession is being heard, I only see three or four people. But 85% of the people that go to

Mass, go to Communion. That really confuses me, because in my day, [Coughs] on a Saturday at least 50% I would say, I won't say 50%, but a large, large number of the congregation would go to Communion... to confession. [Coughs] And if you didn't go to confession very few people went to communion. Obviously confession is a thing of the past. So that's one big change of the church. That the awe of the clergy and the Mass, and religion in general has dissipated. [Noisy background] I think a lot of respect for the church has been dissipated, and I'm just old enough to resent it.

P: Did you have your confessions, and baptism, confirmation, funerals, weddings, whatever, at the same church?

E: Well I didn't, obviously didn't have my baptism there. [P: Laughs] But yah, my confirmation, my First Communion, they were all there.

P: So you're saying now that St. Peter's is pretty much, almost on the verge of being closed?

E: It came close to being closed, There's a new priest there who's trying very hard to get something done, but the upkeep of the church itself is hard. And over the last 20 years there been very little up keep. So a great deal of age has settled in. And there are problems with the structure both inside and outside, but are extremely costly, and there seems no way of raising the funds locally, and certainly the diocese is not going to put the enormous amounts of dollars into it that would be necessary to bring it back into a save and attractive estate. (P: Hm) So that I'm sure as far as the Archdiocese goes, its a white elephant. Just to heat it is extremely difficult thing. It's a large, large church. It's a beautiful church, but without anybody to pay to foot the bill, with no parishioners it's almost impossible that it would last. It's also (--) Let me give you another something that should be imnortant here. In between my house and St. Peter's there's a small ethnic church, called St. Anthony's. St. Anthony's at that time, and from the time it was built until 25 years ago was just a cellar hole that had just been capped over with promises of more church to come later on. And a great deal of that, the money that was recieved to run that church came from the Irish of the neighborhood, but many times we'd go to St. Anthony's rather than continue on the extra 1/4 of a mile to St. Peters. And there was a nice green fence, metal fence around the church in which my grandmother always said was bought by the Irish. Indicating that the Irish funds were a nice side income to the Portuguese. (P: Hm) From I guess what you'd call the [lazy Irish funds], which included my grandmother too, quite often. What I'm getting at there, is that the Irish and the...

P: Portuguese.

E: Portuguese once again were (--) Irish and Portuguese got along very, very well. It was at that time they were just mixed, completely mixed, and to this day I have as many friends from that area that are Portuguese, that I have Irish. In fact more than I think are Portuguese than Irish. As I said, I have friends who are Italian that I grew up with on that street. The French family didn't have any children, but there was an English family whose children I grew up with. Scotch family whose kids use to beat the hell out of me. So that ethnically the neighborhood was not, there were no tensions, at all.

P: Hm. Did, was it, was it hope that your sister's case that she would marry an Irish person?

E: My grandmother and my aunts would probably have considered that to be the desirable thing. My mother, probably would have too, but the main thing would be Catholic. I mean at that point, to marry someone who is not Catholic would have been a big blow! Irish would be desirable, but not, nobody was going to get really upset if that did happen. If my grandfather had been alive he might have, but I mean not in my mother's case or my father's. My father was dead long before she married anyway. He died young.

P: So you had a chance to go back to Ireland?

E: Oh I go back several times.

P: Did your parents have that chance?

E: No. My father was dead before he had the advantages of

P: Old age? Loafing?

E: Low, low, low fares. (P: Oh [Laughs]) I mean he would of have to come back by boat, which was (P: Yah) extremely expensive and time consuming. So he would never (--) I'm not sure that he himself, my father, had a great deal of interest going back to Ireland. I probably was told more about Ireland by my grandparents than their children were. Although my aunt was still alive, was told a great deal. But I don't think my father, or my uncle has paid that much attention to it. And I think it's still true today that it's their generation, rather than the second generation that, or should I say second generation, if the grandparent is of an ethnic background, the first generation doesn't seem to take a great deal of interest in it. Now that's my own opinion. I don't know if you've seen that.

P: Well one of the, one of the things that may happen is if the grandparent is the first first, first whatever, immigrant, first immigrant generation to this country, then they, they tend to depend on there children for (--)

E: But not on the Irish, you see.

P: [Giggles] Yah.

E: The Irish saved a step there because they speak the same language.

P: That's true.

E: So they don't have that.

P: And names are close. (E: Umhm) And the culture may be very close. If the Yankee class means the, the English and the Northern Europeans, then the Irish would be at least close to being in that same (E: Umhm) historical family.

E: Right. That, that's true.

P: Yah.

E: But what I'm saying is weather it is the French, your point is well taken, that it was important for that child, to be the interpreter and to be (--)

P: The American culture.

E: Yah. But also what I'm saying is that if these people, French Canadians excluded, and I'll exclude them for a good reason, but take the Greeks, the Polls, the people who escaped from a country to get here, not too many French escaped from Canada to get here, because they went back and kept a rapor between (P: Right, right) their families, that is similar to what the Irish did, are doing now; (P: Um) and even at that time. So they were not escaping. So, but those people who escaped, those people who fled from something, I don't think that they talked as much about the good times, because I think the bad times were still on the mind. So maybe that's why that first generation, first American, American-born generation doesn't have any inclination toward finding out more about there heritage. But I think there children look up almost always and say you know, What the hell is all this.?" That's my own interpretation of it.

P: Yah.

E: The French,didn't have that. When I say French I'm speaking of Canadian-American French right, which is what the main portion of Lowell's French population was. They don't have that, because they still have [unclear], somebody who comes down, and every summer somebody goes up.

P: That's right.

E: So that you have the rapor there that is almost as, you know, you don't have to worry about what the country was like, you know it. Most French kids that I knew had gone to Canada once or twice to see their relatives. The Irish of those days, of that same day did not, because as I say, it was just not possible economically to do it. But today I know young Irish kids that go over there, or come over here, or young Americans who go back to Ireland by themselves, kids ten or twelve, thirteen years old.

P: Hm. And a lot of, I even noticed among my generation that, well, or among twenty or thirty year olds that there, there's a rival of some of sort of interest in ethnic (--) Well we see it, we see it all the time, but a rival on ethnic sensitivity to the past that I don't, it has to be explained some how. [Laughs]

E: Well I think one of the reasons is that there is now a great deal of activity both history, in history, in social events, exploring the ethnic backgrounds, which was not there 25 years ago. You didn't, you didn't find college groups doing a hell of a lot of searching into the ethnic backgrounds of people.

P: I wonder (--) What I was wondering is, well what, there's been some criticism of today's society that there's a lack of continuity from the past toward the future that each generation seems to start, you know, be born, then they die, and it's lost, everything else is lost. Isn't that (--) So you can see how there, that kind of image of generational change is true. Then there is no continuity and (--) Anyway's, and so, it leads to lives that has no sense of bases, or rootedness, or hope for the future. There's no past, then there's (--) They may not (--) And it seems as though the future is lost to the younger generation. Well the past is lost.

E: I'm not sure that I follow, but if you go back to the 30's (P: Hm) this is, this is pretty esoteric, but.

P: I want to tie it to the, to that, to the past and see (--)

E: Well what I'm saying, in the 30's your needs and demands were very basic. You know, some place to get in out of the cold, and something to burn and keep you warm, and something to put into your stomach. And when things were as tough as they were, and it's hard to describe today how tough those things were. Those were very, very basic needs, and you didn't need anything more esoteric than that. You didn't need something to, you didn't need to worry about the big bomb. I mean you know.

P: Yah.

E: This generation that has grown up and blaming everything on the fact that they don't know where they're going to be tomorrow should have grown up. Cause they're often told I know, in the 30's, when you didn't much care where the hell you were going to be as long as it was warm, and you had something to eat. So that I don't know if, if what you say is true. If there has been a lack of continuity in generation from one generation to the next. I just think that suddenly people are saying it's not a bad thing to be proud of your heritage. And whatever your heritage is, and it's not a bad thing. I think it's starting once again to show a little patriotism is not a bad thing. And it might even be good to have some pride in the country that you're in now.

P: Right.

E: And certainly twenty years ago, or fifteen years ago, that's not the way it was. And I think that at that time any type of, well patriotism was thought to be a bit ridiculous, but also to say that I was Irish rather than I'm a person, was not considered right. You know, you should not think of ethnic divisions at all. You're a human being. You're a person, that's all that's necessary. (P: [Laughs]) Well you don't think that happened?

P: No I understand. I know exactly what you mean.

E: Yah, and I could never understand it.

P: Getting away from labeling people.

E: Right! Yah, you were just going to be a person. Well you know, I'm not just a person. I've got something behind me. You know, you might as well say that I don't have a mother or father. You might as well say, give me a test tube to crawl out of, and say that's it, you know. I, I find these things, and I've always found to be important. Whether it was just the fact that I was playing with a team that was all Irish, that was important to me because I knew I was Irish. I wanted to know, I want now to know who my mother's grandmother was. I unfortunately didn't want to know when she was alive. But I always had an interest when I could meet any of my relatives, and talking to them, and listening to them. It was very important to me, to meet people that came from my family. I'm happy to see a revival in the, in the pride of heritage and ethnic heritage. I'm pleased that the young people are starting, or people that I considered young, of course everybody's young to me now. Well let's go back one thing before I go off, because you started to say something to me and I got you taken away, and it was about holidays. The biggest holiday of course always was Christmas. Even in days when you didn't get a hell of a lot, because there was not a hell of a lot to give, you really didn't know the difference since you didn't have any frame of reference to compare it with. I mean, you know, you got some warm socks and some underwear, and two toys last year, and three toys this year, it was a hell of a good year, you know. The fact that twenty-five years from now everybody was getting 30 toys didn't matter, because you did make do with what you got, and they were very pleased. But after Christmas, the one big holiday and the one everyone looked forward to was 4th of July. And one of the differences in 4th of Julys then, well the big, big difference was the availability of fire crackers, or fire works, legally. (P: Hm) And I told you about the large numbers of small stores that were in all neighborhoods.

P: Umhm.

E: But many of these small stores would build an outdoor stand two or three weeks before the 4th of July, and cover them with red, white and blue crape paper bunting. And then sell, large assortment of one and two [inch] salutes and lady fingers, and cherry bombs, and all sorts of great things that would blow your fingers off. Although I know, I except the fact that it was a very dangerous thing and, many children are grown up with all there fingers intact and without there sight damaged, since they've been outlawed, I miss it. There was a great deal of excitement about lighting fire works off, and throwing them even when your hand swelled up from having them go off. And the other thing was being allowed to stay up late at night to witness this, to take part in it. And in addition to that, in Lowell, on the South Common every 4th of July there was an extremely large carnival, known for a large distance, a large area of Middlesex county would know of this big annual 4th of July celebration. And it would go on up to a week, usually for a week, with rides and free acts, and things of that nature. And if Lowell at that time had 95,000 people then it was a pretty save bet that 75,000 went to that carnival. And that's (--) I'm not exaggerating. It was almost impossible to find someone who would have at least one night walk from whatever part of the city he lived in to come over to walk through the midway. And basically a much simpler time, but the recreations were much simpler, and I think, more importantly then being simple, were enjoyed a hell of a lot more. Going to a movie on a Saturday for a kid was something he looked forward to all week. The [someone enters room – “Oh, Mr. Harley”], you just blew it kid!

P: Well I guess that's all for this interview. If there's any others we'll probably get back to you. If they liked, they liked what we've had to say (--)

E: If they don't?

P&E: Tough luck!

P: [Laughs] Thank you.

E: You're welcome. Okay Paul.

Interview Ends